

**USDA Gay and Lesbian
Employee Advisory Council**

**Annual Report to the Secretary
Fiscal Years 2001 & 2002**

October 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC) provides advice and assistance to the Secretary on implementing the Department's sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy. GLEAC reports the following activities and accomplishments since its first meeting in January 2001 through September 2002:

Developed a Strategic Plan. GLEAC drafted and adopted its Strategic Plan in March 2002. The three goals identified in the GLEAC Strategic Plan will guide GLEAC's activities over the next three years. These goals are (1) GLEAC is an efficient, effective organization; (2) USDA is an employer of choice for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) employees; and (3) GLBT customers of USDA are treated with respect, fairness and equity by USDA employees.

Conducted employee education and listening sessions. These sessions are designed to educate employees about sexual orientation workplace issues and GLEAC's activities, and to gather information about the work environment for GLBT employees at USDA. This initiative is still under way; to date we have completed four of six planned sessions. From these sessions we have concluded that USDA faces two principal problems with regard to sexual orientation: (a) the cultural environment at USDA does not generally encourage the open service of GLBT employees and (b) GLBT issues are not widely understood by most USDA employees and managers.

Drafted an employee survey. GLEAC has partnered with the other Employee Advisory Councils to conduct a survey that will assess the USDA workplace culture and the ability of employees to fully participate, develop and advance within that culture. Data from this survey should be available in FY 2003. GLEAC also hopes to repeat this survey two to four years from now in order to measure changes in the USDA cultural environment over time.

Held a USDA Gay and Lesbian Pride Month celebration and established an annual GLEAC Award. In Washington, DC, on June 13, 2002, GLEAC hosted the first such event and award officially sponsored by the USDA.

Established several educational initiatives. All of the educational materials GLEAC began to develop during the past year are designed to reduce homophobia in the workplace, which is the root cause of the problems we have identified through our education and listening sessions. These educational initiatives include the following:

- We are developing sexual orientation training modules that can be incorporated into ongoing diversity training for employees, supervisors, and civil rights/human resources personnel.
- We drafted and plan to publish a pamphlet on sexual orientation workplace issues and a booklet on GLBT rights and benefits.
- We assisted in revising the USDA Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Handbook to include a discussion of hate crimes.
- We developed a GLEAC web site to inform employees and the public of GLEAC's activities and to disseminate information on sexual orientation workplace issues.

All of the above activities were conducted within a budget of approximately \$47,000. GLEAC plans to continue with the above initiatives in the coming fiscal year. An important new initiative that the council will begin in the coming year is a "Safe Space" Program, which will serve to create a bridge between gay and straight employees and create microenvironments where GLBT employees can feel safe to be out at work.

GLEAC believes that our first 18 months have been successful and that we have established a solid plan for improving the working environment for GLBT employees at USDA. We look forward to furthering these accomplishments in order to achieve the Secretary's goal of "a workplace and society that are inclusive and respectful of differences."

I. INTRODUCTION

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC) provides advice and assistance to the Secretary on implementing the Department's sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy. This council and the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC), of which GLEAC is a part, were formed at a time of transition between Administrations. GLEAC held its first organizational meeting in January 2001 and subsequently began holding monthly telephone conferences. After several months during which representatives to the council were gradually appointed, GLEAC held its first face-to-face meeting of the full council in October 2001.

The report that follows is a summary of the activities and accomplishments of GLEAC since its first meeting in January 2001 through September 2002. Therefore, this first annual report will cover both Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002.

II. BACKGROUND

The President's Management Agenda, the USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement, and the DAC Charter each voice the commitment of the current Administration to diversity and sexual orientation nondiscrimination. These documents guide the activities of GLEAC.

The President's Management Agenda

The President's Management Agenda and the Human Capital Scorecard were issued by the White House and OPM, respectively, in the Fall of 2001. The first initiative within the President's Management Agenda calls for the strategic management of human capital. This initiative seeks to make government more citizen-centered; to link human capital strategies to organizational missions, goals and objectives; and to recruit, retain, and reward a high-quality, high-performing workforce. The Human Capital Scorecard, prepared by OPM to assist Federal Agencies in achieving the President's goals, measures the ability of agencies to "foster a climate that values diversity" as part of an agency's efforts to establish this performance culture in the Federal workplace.

USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement

The current USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement was issued in August 2001. In this statement, Secretary Veneman reiterated the Department's commitment to sexual orientation nondiscrimination, a policy that has been in place at USDA since 1993. The Secretary also stated:

"This must be our passion and our vision. We must continue to strive for a workplace and society that are inclusive and respectful of differences, while working toward unity and harmony. Our actions must always speak louder than words."

The Diversity Advisory Council Charter

The Diversity Advisory Council Charter was signed by Secretary Veneman on May 10, 2002. This charter officially established the Diversity Advisory Council and the seven Employee Advisory Councils, including GLEAC. This Charter carries the following vision statement for the Department of Agriculture:

"The Council envisions an efficient, effective, discrimination-free and diverse organization in which all employees and customers are treated fairly and with dignity and respect."

III. GLEAC ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Meetings

GLEAC has been meeting by telephone conference every month since January 2001. In addition to these conference calls, GLEAC holds a face-to-face meeting of its membership every quarter. Because approximately half of the GLEAC membership is located in USDA field offices, we attempt to hold a proportion of our meetings away from headquarters whenever possible. Our meetings to date are summarized here:

October 23-25, 2001	Washington, DC
February 26-28, 2002	Philadelphia, PA
June 10-13, 2002	Washington, DC
September 24-26, 2002	Atlanta, GA

Charter

As its first initiative, GLEAC prepared a Charter, using guidance provided by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration. This charter was adopted unanimously by the GLEAC membership at its first full council meeting in October 2001. GLEAC submitted this charter, with revisions, to DAC for approval in April 2002. The Charter is attached as Appendix A. GLEAC is currently awaiting signature of this Charter by the Secretary.

Membership

The list of current GLEAC members is attached as Appendix B. This list indicates both the areas of the Department that each member represents and the GLEAC Committees on which each member serves.

GLEAC would like to gratefully acknowledge the service of four original Council members who no longer serve as Co-chairs or Representatives to GLEAC:

Frank Stenger-Castro	Non-career Co-chair
T.J. Myers	Career Co-chair
Andrew Johnson	Principal NRE Representative
Randall Urban	Principal CFO Representative

Strategic Plan

The GLEAC membership developed a Strategic Plan at our February 2002 meeting and unanimously adopted this plan at our March 2002 telephone conference. The Strategic Plan is attached as Appendix C.

The plan consists of three goals and various objectives and strategies for achieving those goals. This plan sets the council's direction for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2005. The goals, objectives and strategies will be reviewed annually and updated as needed by GLEAC.

Each strategy within the plan is assigned to a GLEAC Committee. Committees are responsible for developing action plans, timelines and performance measures for carrying out each of the assigned strategies.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL 1

Goal 1: GLEAC is an efficient, effective organization.

To achieve this goal, GLEAC has developed a number of strategies to collect information from USDA employees regarding gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) issues; to assess the collected information and communicate these issues to the Secretary and Subcabinet; to communicate information about GLEAC activities to USDA employees; to establish partnerships with other organizations within USDA; and to provide positive reinforcement for progress on sexual orientation issues within the Department. In this regard, GLEAC can report the following accomplishments.

Conducted employee education and listening sessions

While drafting our strategic plan, GLEAC assumed two principal problems exist at USDA: (a) the cultural environment at USDA does not generally encourage the open service of GLBT employees and (b) GLBT issues are not widely understood by most USDA employees and managers. These assumptions were based on the experience of GLEAC members as USDA employees and on observations made by the Second USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation in their May 2000 report.

However, GLEAC believes one of our first responsibilities to the Secretary and the Department is to test these assumptions. To do this, we have conducted employee education and listening sessions.

Session design

The employee education and listening sessions are designed to allow employees to meet the members of GLEAC; to educate employees about sexual orientation workplace issues and the council's activities; to gather information on the work environment for GLBT employees at USDA; and to allow the council to assess the Department's level of understanding of sexual orientation workplace issues. Six sessions have been planned, and the first four have been completed:

Washington, DC	June 12, 2002
Kansas City, MO	August 8, 2002
College Park, MD	August 14, 2002
Atlanta, GA	September 25, 2002
Davis, CA	November 5, 2002
Portland, OR	November 6, 2002

GLEAC selected these locations based on the concentrations of USDA employees found in or near these cities and our desire to sample several regions of the country.

For each of the locations listed above, we conducted one education and listening session at a Federal facility during core work hours and then conducted a similar session in the evening at a nearby hotel (one exception was College Park, MD, where we only held an evening session in conjunction with the FSIS Annual Diversity Conference). We found that providing an off-site location where employees could meet with the council away from their coworkers was particularly important for reaching GLBT employees who are not out at work or are reluctant to discuss sexual orientation issues at their work site.

At each session, council members provided an introduction to the Council and its activities; a review of laws, executive orders, and policies that support sexual orientation nondiscrimination in the Federal workplace; and a summary of domestic partner benefits issues. A power point presentation and printed material were used to facilitate the dissemination of this information. The educational presentation was then followed by a listening session. During this session, the audience asked questions of the Council members and, to facilitate discussion, Council members questioned the audience about their work environment and experiences.

Session results

Attendance. Attendance at the on-site meetings ranged from 10 to 50 employees. Two groups of employees were typically attracted to these sessions: civil rights/human resources (CR/HR) personnel and self-identified GLBT employees. The off-site meetings typically attracted 2 to 5 self-identified GLBT employees.

Two principal reasons could account for the apparent low attendance at both the on-site and off-site events. First, many attendees told of a variety of fears and attitudes their coworkers voiced as reasons for not attending. These included: fear that, by attending, an employee would be perceived as gay; fear of being verbally or physically assaulted for attending; fear of asking a supervisor's permission to attend; and moral or religious objections to gays in the workplace. A second contributing factor to low attendance was the inconsistent support we received in advertising these sessions. Offices where management, CR and HR personnel actively advertised and verbally supported the event invariably had higher attendance than those offices where these personnel ignored or failed to support the event.

Audience feedback. To date, the comments and questions we received during the Council's educational presentations and during the listening sessions that followed allow GLEAC to draw two initial conclusions:

1. *The cultural environment for GLBT employees at USDA is that of an invisible workforce.* On one side, many attendees indicated that because managers, HR and CR personnel don't see GLBT people bringing forward workplace issues, concerns or discrimination complaints, they don't believe that GLBT issues need to be addressed. On the other side, for every GLBT employee who attended our sessions, each one told of a far greater number of their GLBT coworkers that are afraid to come out at work. Some attendees reported that homophobic jokes, comments and actions are not discouraged in their workplaces and that managers and supervisors in those workplaces are not held accountable for their inaction. Thus, a stalemate exists where GLBT employees remain closeted and, in the absence of a significant number of openly GLBT employees, management does not feel compelled to create an environment where employees can be comfortably out at work.

2. *There is an enormous need for training on sexual orientation issues at USDA.* As discussed above, many of the attendees at our on-site events were CR/HR personnel. All of these employees greatly appreciated the educational presentations and printed material provided by the Council and were hungry for more information, resources and support. Most either demonstrated or acknowledged that there is a minimal level of understanding in the CR/HR community for GLBT workplace and discrimination issues. Furthermore, the accounts of homophobic coworker and managerial attitudes recounted by GLBT employees demonstrates that USDA needs to begin teaching respectful workplace behavior and managerial responsibility.

The face of discrimination

Aside from providing the Council with information, the education and listening sessions also proved to be powerful events for the employees who attended. These events served as opportunities for GLBT and non-GLBT employees to tell their stories and to learn from each other. Four examples of the many stories we heard are cited here:

- One lesbian employee told of how her domestic partner, also a USDA employee, was relocated by the Department from one region to another. The move cost the couple \$18,000 because the Department (per regulation) could only pay for half of the relocation costs associated with the sale of their jointly owned home and the purchase of a new home. Also, she received no assistance from the Department in finding a new job and was required to prove through a birth certificate that their child was the biological son of the relocated employee before his air fare would be paid. This story left a distinct impression on married employees in the audience whose families would never be subjected to such treatment or requests for documentation by the Department.
- One lesbian employee told of how her lesbian coworker refused to come to our listening session because she was afraid her straight coworkers would physically harm her if they knew she was a lesbian. Many straight employees in the audience were shocked to learn that any employee would feel unsafe for simply attending a USDA meeting.
- One gay male employee reported that he was jokingly told by a security guard that the security office would need to “order a box of latex gloves and extra ammunition” for the day of the GLEAC listening session.
- One gay male reported (at an off-site listening session) that he believes he is the only gay employee in his Agency in his state and that, if he wants to advance in his Agency, he knows he cannot come out at work.

Taken together, the results of our education and listening sessions to date serve to confirm the two problems discussed at the beginning of this section.¹ Furthermore, they indicate that homophobia (the fear, dislike or misunderstanding of GLBT people) is the root cause of the problems we have identified. This information will be used by the GLEAC Training and Communication Committees as GLEAC continues to develop the educational materials and activities discussed under Goals 2 & 3 of our strategic plan.

¹Additional information will be collected through the two remaining sessions to be held in November 2002 and through the employee survey discussed in the following section. These data will be fully summarized in FY 2003.

Drafted an employee survey

In addition to collecting information from employees through our education and listening sessions, GLEAC has partnered with the other Employee Advisory Councils to conduct a Diversity Survey of USDA employees. The survey questions are designed to help the Councils understand the workplace culture at USDA and the ability of employees to fully participate, develop and advance within that culture. The questions to be included in this survey were drafted at the end of FY 2002 by the Councils with the assistance of the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The Councils plan to pilot and then distribute this survey to all USDA employees in early FY 2003. The survey will be completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. The survey responses will only be used to produce statistical summary tables. The Councils will use the responses to this survey to identify problems and to develop methods, such as training, to improve the work life of all USDA employees. Furthermore, by repeating this survey two to four years from now, the Councils will be able to measure the success of our efforts to improve the USDA cultural environment over time.

Held a USDA Gay and Lesbian Pride Month Celebration

Each year, GLBT Americans celebrate June as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. Since the mid 1990's, members of USDA GLOBE have organized Pride Month events within the Department. This year, GLEAC successfully sought to make these unofficial events an official part of the USDA's annual calendar of special observances.

Through DAC, GLEAC recommended that the Secretary issue a Pride Month proclamation and authorize the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to host and fund a Pride event. In response, the Office of the Secretary delegated to the Assistant Secretary for Administration the responsibility of issuing a Department-wide statement on Pride Month (see Appendix D for the text of this statement). The Office of the Secretary also authorized OCR to assist GLEAC and USDA GLOBE in hosting a Pride Month event.

The Pride Month event was held in the Jefferson Auditorium of the South Building in Washington, DC, on June 13, 2002. The featured speakers included Candace Gingrich, Director of the Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project, and Barbara Warner, President of the DC Metro Chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). The event attracted approximately 200 attendees.

Visible reaction to the Departmental Pride Month statement and event was generally positive. The Office of the ASA received 75 letters or e-mail messages supporting the Department's actions and only 8 messages opposing. This was in stark contrast to the over 400 negative e-mails received in FSIS in 2001 in response to a Pride Month event sponsored by USDA GLOBE and supported by FSIS Administrator Tom Billy. GLEAC believes that the difference seen in the visible reactions to the 2001 and 2002 events is directly attributable to the support of management voiced in the Pride Month statement issued by Assistant Secretary Gallegos.

Furthermore, while other Departments, such as the Department of Commerce, received negative press attention for withholding support for a Pride Month event, USDA received no such negative press. USDA was one of four Cabinet Departments or independent Agencies to support Pride Month events in 2002.

**Established an annual
GLEAC award**

GLEAC has established an annual award in order to provide positive reinforcement for progress on sexual orientation issues within the Department. GLEAC made the first presentation of this award at the Pride Month event on June 13, 2002. As described in the call for nominations, “The GLEAC Award is given annually to a USDA employee or group to recognize excellence in creating an inclusive and supportive work environment for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees of USDA.”

The Council unanimously selected Patricia C. Browne as the recipient of the first annual GLEAC Award. Ms. Browne is the recently retired Civil Rights Director for the Economic Research Service. In her tenure at USDA, Ms. Browne organized the first meeting of USDA GLOBE in 1993 and served as the organization’s first President (1994 - 1995); served as a member of the First USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation (1993 - 1994); and served as the Chair of the Second USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation (1999 – 2000). Ms. Browne’s work through GLOBE, the task forces, and as a CR Director led to the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Department’s discrimination complaints procedure and the eventual creation of GLEAC by the Secretary. The text of the plaque presented to Ms. Browne can be found as Appendix E.

**Developed a GLEAC
web site**

In order to provide information to employees and the public about GLEAC, the Council has established a GLEAC web site. This site was developed in conjunction with the other six Employee Advisory Councils and the Diversity Advisory Council. This web site describes the Council’s mission, activities, and membership, and provides a means for employees or the public to contact the Council. The GLEAC web site address is
<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/USDA%20Council%20Files/gl.htm>.

**Drafted a GLEAC
Brochure**

As another mechanism for providing information about the Council to employees, GLEAC has developed a brochure that describes the Council and its mission. A draft of this brochure can be found as Appendix F. This brochure is currently with the Office of Human Resources Management awaiting printing.

V. ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS 2 & 3

Goal 2: USDA is an employer of choice for GLBT employees.

Goal 3: GLBT customers of USDA are treated with respect, fairness and equity by USDA employees.

To achieve these goals, GLEAC has developed a number of strategies to recruit, hire, develop, and retain GLBT employees; foster inclusiveness and mutual respect within the USDA workforce; provide fair and equitable service to GLBT customers; and to increase the participation of diverse communities conducting business with USDA.

For the purposes of this report, we are considering these two goals together because the employee educational activities conducted during the past year to achieve these goals apply to both employment and customer service issues. For these two goals, GLEAC can report the following accomplishments.

Developing sexual orientation training modules

Even though sexual orientation nondiscrimination has been included in the Department's Civil Rights Policy Statement since 1993, little to no training has occurred at USDA on sexual orientation workplace issues during the intervening years. This deficiency was identified in the May 2000 report of the Second USDA Task Force on Sexual Orientation and was addressed in several of its recommendations. Therefore, shortly after its formation, GLEAC identified training as its top priority. Subsequently, the preliminary findings of our recent education and listening sessions have confirmed the need for such training.

In FY 2001 and 2002, GLEAC began a multiyear project to develop sexual orientation training modules for use in USDA. With the assistance of a contractor (Bonnie J. Berger & Associates), GLEAC has studied the problem of how to bring sexual orientation training to the Department.

Benchmarking

First, we evaluated what sexual orientation training has been conducted in other Federal Departments or in private sector companies with a population size similar to USDA. Our research concluded that no Agency-wide training on sexual orientation issues has been conducted in other Federal Departments. For private sector companies that have conducted such training, sexual orientation issues have been incorporated into broad diversity training programs rather than being offered as a separate training subject.

Target audiences

Second, we have identified three target audiences that need to receive sexual orientation training at USDA and have proposed how best to reach these audiences:

All employees: USDA requires that all employees receive some amount of civil rights training every year. GLEAC believes that sexual orientation issues need to be included in these annual training sessions.

Managers and supervisors: USDA employees who manage and supervise other employees have a critical need to understand sexual orientation issues in order to have the skills necessary to deal with personnel issues or conflicts that may arise in the workplace. The Department requires supervisory personnel to undergo training on CR, HR, and diversity issues. GLEAC believes that sexual orientation issues need to be included in this ongoing training.

CR, HR and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) personnel: These personnel have a unique need to understand sexual orientation issues in order to effectively manage employee benefits, complaints, and grievances. Sexual orientation information needs to be included in the regular training schedule for these employees.

Training content

Third, we have outlined three broad content areas that should be included for each of the target audiences:

Awareness: The target audiences need to understand why sexual orientation is a workplace issue and the challenges that face GLBT employees. Heterosexism, homophobia and a workplace culture that keeps GLBT employees in the closet have a negative impact on employee productivity, job satisfaction and retention.

Information: The target audiences need accurate information on the laws, Executive Orders and policies that prohibit sexual orientation discrimination at USDA. Employees need clear definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity and related terms in order to dispel myths about GLBT people. Providing this information

will help curb inappropriate workplace behavior such as anti-gay jokes, employment discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace violence.

Skill building: The awareness and information provided to the target audiences must be designed to effect a change in behavior. Therefore, the training should also focus on skill building. The training should help develop intervention skills for halting negative comments or actions, and should identify opportunities to make the USDA workplace more welcoming for GLBT employees. The training should also identify resources that can be used when dealing with GLBT issues in the workplace.

Delivery methods

Finally, GLEAC has recently identified a second contractor (Ashby & Associates, Inc.) to begin the task of identifying the appropriate delivery methods for the training discussed above. The most effective methods will likely vary with the three target audiences based on the varying depth of knowledge required by the three groups. This work has just begun and will be completed in FY 2003.

Drafted a pamphlet on sexual orientation workplace issues

In conjunction with developing the training modules discussed above, GLEAC is developing informational pamphlets and booklets that can be distributed in paper and electronic forms. Three of these initiatives are discussed in this and the following two sections of this report.

We have completed development of a pamphlet entitled: *Sexual Orientation in the Workplace – Questions and Answers* (see Appendix G). This pamphlet is a single page document that is intended for distribution to all employees. This document is currently in the final stages of clearance for printing and distribution.

Drafted a booklet on GLBT workplace rights and benefits

We are currently drafting a booklet entitled: *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Rights and Benefits at USDA*. This document will be a handbook that explains the unique ways nondiscrimination rules and Federal benefits apply to GLBT employees:

- Sexual orientation is not included in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. However, GLBT Federal employees are protected from employment discrimination through the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act and through Executive Order 13087. Therefore, the avenues of redress for discrimination complaints are different for GLBT employees as compared to other protected classes.
- While the Federal government does not offer domestic partner benefits, GLBT employees can designate their partners as beneficiaries of certain benefits such as the Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

The booklet will discuss the nuances of the avenues of redress and benefits available to GLBT employees at USDA. The primary intended audience for this booklet will be GLBT employees and CR/HR specialists. However it will be available in printed or electronic format to any interested employee. A draft of the text of this document is nearly complete. Printing and distribution should occur in the second quarter of FY 2003.

**Assisted in revising the
USDA Workplace
Violence Prevention and
Response handbook**

During FY 2001, GLEAC assisted Departmental Administration with their revision of *The USDA Handbook on Workplace Violence Prevention and Response*. This document can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/da/workplace.pdf>.

GLEAC's contribution to this effort was to ensure that the document contains a discussion of bias against certain groups (race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) as a motivation for workplace violence and that it identifies hate speech as a useful indicator of a potentially violent situation. Hate crime statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Southern Poverty Law Center indicate that homosexuals are more likely to be physically assaulted than any other group of American citizens. The revised edition of the handbook was issued in October, 2001.

VI. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCED SUCCESS

GLEAC believes that our first 18 months have been productive, and we are proud of our accomplishments. Furthermore, we anticipate building on the above accomplishments and expect that FY 2003 will be even more successful. The energy and excitement that this council brings to our work is founded in the realization that GLEAC represents the first opportunity for GLBT employees to serve as an official arm of the Department responsible for solving sexual orientation workplace problems. For this opportunity, GLEAC would like to express its thanks to the Secretary and the Subcabinet.

With this desire to serve the Secretary and the Department in mind, GLEAC believes this report would be incomplete if we failed to identify areas where, if certain impediments were removed, our council could experience even greater levels of success than we achieved this past year. These opportunities to remove institutional impediments fall into two categories:

**Enhanced managerial
support**

Strong support from the highest levels of USDA management is necessary for the continued success of GLEAC. During the past year, the support of Assistant Secretary Lou Gallegos, in public and through memorandums, has allowed GLEAC to hold a Pride Month event and to conduct our education and listening sessions with a minimal amount of opposition. In the absence of such a champion, sexual orientation often becomes a divisive workplace issue.

Based on the positive momentum established this year, GLEAC plans to submit a request for a Secretarial proclamation on Pride Month for June 2003. We encourage the Secretary to further USDA's position as an Administration leader on diversity issues by signing such a proclamation. This would be in keeping with other leaders in the Administration who signed similar documents in June 2002, such as Secretary Mineta of the Department of Transportation and Governor Whitman of the Environmental Protection Agency.

We also encourage the various Agencies within USDA to increase their support for GLBT issues. For example:

- While several Agencies acted promptly to distribute Mr. Gallegos' June 4 memo on Pride Month, there were many more Agencies who failed to do so. This is true even though this message was addressed to all employees and was distributed electronically by the Office of the Chief Information Officer to all Agency systems administrators.

- While we are grateful to the various CR and HR offices that have hosted GLEAC's education and listening sessions, there are other Mission Area and Agency personnel who, although requested to do so by GLEAC and Assistant Secretary Gallegos, failed to inform their employees of the availability of these sessions or to encourage their employees to attend.
- Some USDA managers showed a generalized reluctance to engage or support GLBT issues over the past year in other ways, such as: a reluctance to fund or approve travel for some GLEAC members to attend Council meetings; a lack of inclusion of GLBT or GLEAC issues in Agency Newsletters when requested; slowness of appointments of representatives to GLEAC; and a restriction against the use of the Whitten Building Patio for a GLEAC event while approving similar events for other groups.

GLEAC has begun to take steps to overcome these impediments. For example, we recently sent a letter to each Undersecretary and their Agency Administrators to introduce their GLEAC representatives to them in hopes of opening a dialog between management and GLEAC on GLBT issues. We are also developing, where necessary, more direct lines of e-mail communication in order to disseminate GLEAC information to the Agencies. These steps would not be necessary, however, if Agency managers attached the same significance to GLBT issues that is applied to other special emphasis areas.

Enhanced Diversity Advisory Council support

The efficient operation of the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) is critical to the success of GLEAC, more so than with any of the other Employee Advisory Councils. While being supported by DAC, each of the other six councils also has a broader support system within the Department that includes a Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) in the Office of Civil Rights and a SEPM infrastructure within each Agency in the Department. This system facilitates the education of employees on diversity issues and assists management in the recruitment of a diverse employee applicant pool. GLEAC and GLBT issues are not included in this support structure.² Therefore, in the absence of other implementation avenues, any deficiency in the operation of DAC translates into a weakened effectiveness of GLEAC.

GLEAC encourages DAC to examine the following missed opportunities that occurred in the past year and to take actions that will benefit not only GLEAC but all seven councils:

- DAC considered developing a strategic plan but tabled this idea in February 2002. Since that time, each EAC has developed its own strategic plan, action plan or business plan. GLEAC believes that DAC, if it wishes to fulfill its role as a coordinating body, should develop a plan that identifies the key goals the EACs could achieve collectively. Such a plan should be developed as soon as possible.
- The EAC charters have been drafted, approved and signed by their councils and were submitted to DAC in April 2002. These documents should be approved by DAC and signed by the Secretary without further delay.

²Note that section 1.5.A of the GLEAC Strategic Plan calls for the establishment of a GLBT SEPM infrastructure.

- During the past year, DAC has occasionally discussed holding an educational forum or “launch event” to communicate information about the Diversity Advisory Council initiative. Unfortunately, there are currently no plans for such an event. Consequently, most employees do not know these advisory councils exist. GLEAC urges DAC to make plans to announce and promote this initiative widely.
- Each EAC has drafted an informational brochure and submitted these drafts to DAC and OHRM for printing in July 2002. These brochures should be approved by DAC and printed without further delay.

VII. BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

During FY 2001-2002 GLEAC spent approximately \$47,000. Of this amount, \$35,000 was obligated for two contracts with training specialists and \$12,000 was devoted to GLEAC’s discretionary spending. An itemized summary of GLEAC’s expenditures can be found in Appendix H.

VIII. NEXT STEPS

During FY 2003, GLEAC plans to continue with the full implementation of our Strategic Plan. This will include the completion of current projects and the start of several new initiatives.

Completion of current projects

- The final education and listening sessions will be held in Davis, CA and Portland, OR in November 2002. The data from all six sessions will be summarized after the last session has been completed.
- The Diversity Survey (developed jointly with the other EACs) should be distributed to all USDA employees in early FY 2003. Data analysis on the survey responses should be completed well before the end of FY 2003.
- The publication of the GLEAC brochure, pamphlet on sexual orientation, and booklet on rights and benefits should occur in early FY 2003.
- The GLEAC web site will be updated regularly throughout the year and will serve as one method to disseminate the above publications to employees and the public, as well as to receive their input and requests for further information.
- During the first half of FY 2003, GLEAC will continue to work with its current contractor, Ashby & Associates, Inc., to define the appropriate content and delivery methods for our training modules. GLEAC will seek FY 2003 DAC funding in order to produce and pilot test the training instruments currently being designed.

New initiatives

- During FY 2003, GLEAC plans to expand the scope of the USDA Gay and Lesbian Pride Month celebration to include several events at the USDA headquarters facility in Washington, DC. GLEAC also intends to develop a package of suggestions and guidance on how to conduct a Pride Month celebration for USDA field offices interested in holding such events.

- GLEAC is organizing an Outreach Committee to begin establishing better lines of communication and cooperation between GLEAC and a variety of Departmental and Agency offices (such as CR, HR, ADR, and OCG) and with other organizations such as Unions and the other six EACs.
- During FY 2003, GLEAC plans to develop and pilot a USDA “Safe Space” program. Such programs have been implemented in private sector companies and at least one Federal Department (Commerce) as a means of breaking down barriers between gay and straight employees. In these programs, an employee places in his or her office a small sign or magnet with a symbol, such as a pink triangle surrounded by a green circle. This sign indicates the employee’s acceptance and support of GLBT coworkers and communicates to GLBT employees that the designated space is one where it is safe for employees to be themselves. GLEAC will seek DAC funding to develop web-based training on this program and to conduct a small pilot test of this program at USDA during FY 2003.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

During FY 2001-2002, GLEAC has attempted to identify the problems associated with fully implementing the USDA policy of sexual orientation nondiscrimination. We conclude that the current primary problems are (a) the cultural environment at USDA does not generally encourage the open service of GLBT employees and (b) GLBT issues are not widely understood by most USDA employees and managers. This conclusion is based on data collected previously by past USDA task forces, data collected through our employee education and listening sessions, and on the collective experience of council members. Furthermore, we will continue to test this conclusion through the upcoming USDA Diversity Survey.

We have attempted to craft solutions to these problems through our Strategic Plan. This Plan is our council’s central document and will guide our activities through FY 2005. We have devised our plan and strategies to be complimentary to the fundamental documents that guide the existence of our council: the USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement, the DAC Charter, and the President’s Management Agenda.

We are now beginning to implement the strategies within our Strategic Plan and have reported our initial accomplishments in this report. The thrust of our current efforts and accomplishments (development of training modules, pamphlets, booklets, a web site, Pride Month celebrations and awards) can be summarized in a single word: *education*. Our educational efforts are designed to overcome the root cause of the problems we have identified. That root cause is homophobia, which exists within USDA as it does in American society.

Our success in solving the two cultural environment problems we have identified will be difficult to measure. Over the next few years there are some simple measurements of success that we will be able to make. For example, we will be able to count the number of people that attend sexual orientation training and the number of brochures or other educational documents that are distributed to employees. Eventually, however, we will need to measure the behavioral changes that result from our educational efforts. For this it will be critical that we repeat the USDA Diversity Survey two to four years after the FY 2003 survey results establish a baseline of GLBT employment and cultural attitudes at USDA.

Finally, despite the immense challenge of the problems we face, GLEAC believes that our first 18 months have been successful and that we have established a solid plan for improving the cultural environment for GLBT employees at USDA. We look forward to furthering these accomplishments in order to achieve the Secretary’s goal of “a workplace and society that are inclusive and respectful of differences.”

This report is submitted by:

/s/ Peter Wood
Peter Wood
(GLEAC Career Co-Chair)

October 31, 2002
(Date)

/s/ Lou Gallegos
Lou Gallegos
(GLEAC Non-career Co-Chair)

November 4, 2002
(Date)

APPENDIX A

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GAY AND LESBIAN EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COUNCIL

CHARTER

ARTICLE 1 – PURPOSE

The Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC) was established by the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide advice and assistance to the Secretary and Subcabinet on implementing the Department's sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy and the creation of an accepting work environment. GLEAC will help ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals have equal access to employment, career development, and promotion opportunities; full participation in the benefits and responsibilities of employment; and the ability to serve openly within the Department without the fear of harassment or violence. GLEAC will also help ensure that GLBT customers of USDA have full and equal access to Departmental program benefits and services.

ARTICLE 2 – ACTIVITIES

To provide the advice and assistance described in Article 1, the activities that GLEAC will undertake can include, but are not limited to, the following actions:

- 2.1 Assist the Secretary and Subcabinet in promoting unity and understanding among all USDA employees.
- 2.2 Advise the Secretary and Subcabinet on the opportunities that exist for implementing the Department's sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy within the existing laws which govern the employment, program delivery, and civil rights activities of the Executive Branch.
- 2.3 Encourage the development of USDA outreach programs to provide for opportunities to attract, hire and retain GLBT employees.
- 2.4 Foster the development of USDA programs that prevent harassment, ensure safety, and encourage the open service of GLBT employees.
- 2.5 Assist the Secretary and Subcabinet in developing an environment that encourages the career development and training of GLBT employees; recognizes the talents, skills, and contributions of GLBT employees; and welcomes the admission of openly GLBT individuals into USDA management positions.
- 2.6 Advise the Secretary and Subcabinet on the opportunities for providing equal employment benefits to GLBT employees.

- 2.7 Advise the Secretary and Subcabinet on ways to ensure that USDA programs are delivered equitably and consistently, and in a manner that considers the needs of GLBT customers and employees.
- 2.8 Advise the Secretary and Subcabinet on proposed management actions to ensure that those actions are sensitive to the needs of GLBT employees and customers.
- 2.9 Regularly evaluate and report on the progress achieved in implementing the Department's sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy to the Secretary and Subcabinet.
- 2.10 Encourage Department-wide consistency in USDA activities that address sexual orientation issues and advise on ways to refine these activities based on information collected from similar initiatives conducted by other Federal agencies.
- 2.11 Work with the USDA Diversity Advisory Council to prepare a consolidated annual budget request in order to coordinate GLEAC activities with the activities of the other Employee Advisory Councils.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERS

The GLEAC membership shall consist of two Co-Chairs; two Representatives (a Principal and an Alternate) from each USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, and Selected Employee Organization; Resource Advisors; and an Executive Assistant. The Secretary may appoint additional voting or non-voting members as the Secretary deems necessary.

3.1 Co-Chairs

- A. The Secretary will designate two Co-Chairs, with one being a non-career appointee and the other being a career employee.
- B. The term of office for each Co-Chair shall be 2 years, and the Secretary shall replace or re-designate one Co-Chair each year. The terms of these offices should expire on alternate years.

3.2 Representatives

- A. The USDA Subcabinet Offices, Mission Areas, and Selected Employee Organizations listed below shall each appoint one Principal and one Alternate Representative to GLEAC:

1. Chief Information Officer (CIO)
2. Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
3. Departmental Administration (DA, OSec, OIG, OGC, OC and other offices as appropriate)
4. Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE)
5. Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services (FFAS)
6. Under Secretary for Rural Development (RD)
7. Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS)
8. Under Secretary for Food Safety (FS)
9. Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE)
10. Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP)
11. USDA Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Employee Organization (GLOBE)

B. Representatives will be appointed without time limits. The USDA Subcabinet Offices, Mission Areas, and Selected Employee Organizations may replace a Representative at any time. A Representative may step down upon notification to GLEAC and his or her Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization. A Representative must vacate his or her seat on GLEAC if he or she transfers out of his or her USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization.

C. Representatives who permit their Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization to go unrepresented for three consecutive GLEAC meetings may, at the discretion of GLEAC, be dismissed in writing as disinterested parties. Within 30 days of the dismissal, GLEAC will submit a request in writing to the affected USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization asking for replacement Representatives.

D. In the event of a vacancy, the affected USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization shall appoint a replacement Representative within 30 days of receiving notice of the vacancy. GLEAC will notify the Secretary of any vacancy or replacement.

3.3 Resource Advisors

A. The USDA Offices listed below shall appoint Resource Advisors to GLEAC when requested by the Secretary or GLEAC in order to provide information in their field of expertise:

1. Civil Rights
2. Office of General Counsel
3. Human Resources Management
4. Operations
5. Property, and Procurement Management
6. Outreach
7. Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

B. The Secretary or GLEAC may invite or appoint additional Resource Advisors (e.g., Employee Unions and employee organizations such as The Coalition of Minority Employees) as necessary to achieve the stated purpose and activities of GLEAC.

C. GLEAC may invite USDA employees and other individuals outside of USDA to attend GLEAC meetings and to serve as non-appointed Resource Advisors in their field of expertise.

3.4 Executive Assistant

An Executive Assistant will be hired by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and assigned to provide administrative support to GLEAC.

ARTICLE 4 – MEMBER DUTIES

4.1 Co-Chairs

A. Shall exercise supervision and provide leadership over all affairs of GLEAC.

- B. Shall chair GLEAC meetings and be the official spokespersons for GLEAC.
- C. May participate in GLEAC discussions and may vote on issues brought before GLEAC.
- D. Shall establish GLEAC Committees, as necessary, and shall appoint Committee Chairs and Committee Members.
- E. Shall have the authority to sign and execute agreements, obligations, and financial documents on behalf of GLEAC, with the concurrence of the Council.

4.2 Representatives

- A. May participate in GLEAC discussions and may vote on issues brought before GLEAC, as described in section 5.2.
- B. Shall identify issues of concern within their USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization and advance those issues to GLEAC.
- C. Shall keep their USDA Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization informed concerning all GLEAC proposals, plans, and activities.
- D. Shall monitor and report on progress within their Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization regarding adherence to GLEAC interests.

4.3 Resource Advisors

- A. May participate in GLEAC discussions and serve on GLEAC Committees.
- B. May advance issues to GLEAC.
- C. May not vote on issues brought before GLEAC.

4.4 Executive Assistant

- A. Shall be responsible for the logistics of all GLEAC meetings.
- B. Shall be responsible for recording the proceedings of all GLEAC meetings.
- C. Shall maintain and distribute all official GLEAC documents and correspondence, including the minutes of all GLEAC meetings.
- D. Shall conduct other tasks assigned by the GLEAC Co-Chairs, within the scope of the Executive Assistant's designated duties as an employee of OHRM.
- E. May participate in GLEAC discussions but may not vote on issues brought before GLEAC.

4.5 Committee Members

- A. Must be members of GLEAC.

- B. Will be appointed by the Co-Chairs.
- C. Will take guidance from and report back to GLEAC in order to carry out specific tasks or objectives for GLEAC.
- D. Shall obtain and utilize the necessary resources to complete the assigned tasks.

ARTICLE 5 – MEETINGS AND VOTING PROCEDURES

5.1 Regular and Special Meetings

- A. Regular GLEAC meetings will be held quarterly at a location to be determined by the Council. GLEAC will also confer through monthly phone conferences.
- B. Special meetings of GLEAC may be called when deemed necessary by the Co-Chairs and/or the Secretary.

5.2 Voting Procedures

- A. Each Co-Chair and each Principal Representative shall have one vote, for a total of 13 votes. An Alternate Representative may vote in the absence of his or her Principal Representative. Resource Advisors and the Executive Assistant do not have voting privileges.
- B. A quorum shall be established prior to any votes taken during GLEAC meetings. A quorum shall consist of 6 Representatives from the 11 USDA Subcabinet Offices, Mission Areas, and Selected Employee Organizations, and at least one Co-Chair, for a total of 7 voting members. If both the Principal and the Alternate Representatives from a given Subcabinet Office, Mission Area, or Selected Employee Organization are present, only one of those two individuals will be counted towards the determination of a quorum.
- C. With the exception of changes to the Charter, all issues brought before GLEAC will be decided by a simple majority of the quorum present.

ARTICLE 6 – TIME AND TRAVEL

- 6.1** Each GLEAC Member's respective Agency shall agree to allow official time for Members to work on GLEAC activities and to attend GLEAC meetings.

ARTICLE 7 – APPROVAL AND CHANGES TO THE CHARTER

- 7.1. The Charter may be amended, altered, repealed or replaced as deemed necessary by GLEAC.
- 7.2. All proposed changes to the Charter shall be discussed at two consecutive GLEAC meetings prior to a vote. Voting on proposed changes to the charter shall be conducted by a mailed ballot. A two-thirds majority of the voting members (i.e., 9 of 13) shall be required for approval of such changes.
- 7.3 The approved Charter and any changes to the Charter shall be submitted through the USDA Diversity Advisory Council to the Secretary for approval.

Submitted by:

/s/ Peter Wood
(GLEAC Career Co-Chair)

April 9, 2002
(Date)

/s/ Lou Gallegos
(GLEAC Non-career Co-Chair)

April 9, 2002
(Date)

Approved by:

(USDA Secretary)

(Date)

APPENDIX B

USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council Membership

Non-Career Co-Chair:

Lou Gallegos
Assistant Secretary, DA

Career Co-chair:

Peter Wood
AMS

Representatives:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Alternate</u>
<i>Mission Area</i>		
NRE	Sharon Nance	Craig Mahaffey
FFAS	Wayne Rieger	Larry Durrant
RD	Bill Scaggs	Beryl Gillard
FNCS	Melvin Fong	Joe Gallagher
FS	Dan Engeljohn	Harry Walker
REE	Phil Schwab	Marsha Golden
MRP	Linda Detwiler	Billy Cox
<i>Subcabinet Office</i>		
CIO		
CFO	Darren Guttuso	
DA		
<i>Employee Organization</i>		
USDA GLOBE	Michael McElvaine	Blake Velde
Resource Advisors:		
OCR	Carol Fields	
OHRM-Benefits	Elizabeth Daly	
OHRM-Training	James Arnott	
The Coalition of Minority Employees	Penny Kriesch	Geraldine Herring
Transgender issues	Diane Kelly	

Executive Assistant:

T. J. Myers (Office of Human Resources Management)

USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council Committees

Communications Committee

Chair: **Mel Fong**
Members: **Phil Schwab, Blake Velde, Larry Durant, Sharon Nance**

Pride Committee

Chair: **Phil Schwab**
Members: **Billy Cox, Beryl Gillard, T.J. Myers, Carol Fields**

Training Committee

Chair: **Craig Mahaffey**
Members: **Marsha Golden, Bill Scaggs**

Survey Committee

Chair: **Dan Engeljohn**
Members: **Michael McElvaine, Wayne Rieger, Sharon Nance,
Craig Mahaffey**

Benefits Committee

Chair: **Larry Durant**
Members: **Darren Guttuso, Harry Walker, Joe Gallagher**

Awards Committee

Chair: **Marsha Golden**
Members: **Dan Engeljohn, Phil Schwab**

Listening Sessions Committee

Chair: **Sharon Nance**
Members: **Craig Mahaffey, Blake Velde, Dan Engeljohn, T.J. Myers**

APPENDIX C

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council Strategic Plan 2002-2005

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council (GLEAC) Charter states that the purpose of GLEAC is “to provide advice and assistance to the Secretary and Subcabinet on implementing the Department’s sexual orientation nondiscrimination policy and the creation of an accepting work environment.” Consistent with this purpose, GLEAC has developed the following Strategic Plan. This plan was developed with two ideas in mind. First, Goal 1 defines the objectives and strategies necessary for the operation of GLEAC. Second, the objectives and strategies found under Goals 2 and 3 define how GLEAC will contribute to the overall achievement of the Departmental goals for diversity, as set out in the USDA Diversity Advisory Council’s Draft Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: GLEAC is an efficient, effective organization.

Objective 1.1: Collect employee concerns regarding sexual orientation issues in the Department.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Establish employee listening sessions to hear employee concerns.
- B. Develop and implement a web-based forum for receiving concerns from employees.
- C. Conduct a survey to assess the USDA cultural environment.
- D. Conduct outreach to employees through e-mail and other means to solicit their concerns.
- E. Utilize Resource Advisors to gather employee concerns and other information specific to their areas of expertise.

Objective 1.2: Assess employee concerns regarding sexual orientation issues and communicate these issues to the Secretary and Subcabinet.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Establish regular mechanisms for communication between GLEAC Representatives and their Mission Areas on sexual orientation issues.
- B. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary on sexual orientation issues in the Department.

Objective 1.3: Communicate information about GLEAC activities to USDA employees.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Develop and maintain a GLEAC web site.
- B. Develop a GLEAC brochure.
- C. E-mail information to employees.
- D. Use Resource Groups to disseminate information.

Objective 1.4: Provide positive reinforcement for progress on sexual orientation issues within the Department.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Establish an annual Secretary's GLBT civil rights award and submit nominations for other Departmental awards for individuals or groups advancing GLBT civil rights at USDA.
- B. Encourage the Secretary to issue an annual Pride Month proclamation and to hold a Pride month celebration.
- C. Nominate USDA groups or individuals for external GLBT awards to promote recognition outside of USDA.

Objective 1.5: Develop partnerships with Departmental service organizations.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Partner with Civil Rights offices to encourage the establishment of GLBT SEPMS and encourage the inclusion of GLBT issues in the CR review process.
- B. Partner with Human Resources Management offices on their activities affecting benefits, recruitment, retention, awards, evaluations, and the Employee Assistance Program.
- C. Partner with Unions in the areas of arbitration, negotiated grievances and benefits negotiations.
- D. Partner with ADR offices.
- E. Partner with other EACs.
- F. Partner with OGC.

Goal 2: USDA is an employer of choice for GLBT employees.

Objective 2.1. Recruit and hire GLBT employees.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Encourage the Department to extend relocation and government housing benefits to include the domestic partners of USDA employees.
- B. Advocate for domestic partner benefits for Federal employees, using appropriate Departmental channels and opportunities.
- C. Encourage Departmental recruitment specialists to include information regarding GLBT issues and to include GLBT networks in their recruitment and outreach activities.

Objective 2.2. Develop and retain GLBT employees.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Encourage the Office of Civil Rights to revise DR 4300-7 (procedures for processing employee discrimination complaints) to clarify sexual orientation issues.
- B. Work with Departmental Administration to develop and distribute a booklet on the process for filing a sexual orientation discrimination complaint and on currently available domestic partner benefits.
- C. Develop a pilot “Safe Space” program that can be used by Mission Areas to foster an environment where GLBT employees can be out without negative consequences on their careers.

Objective 2.3 Foster inclusiveness and mutual respect within the USDA workforce.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Establish an ongoing Secretarial dialog on GLBT issues, through Pride Month celebrations and other opportunities.
- B. Work with Departmental Administration to develop and distribute to all employees a pamphlet on sexual orientation.
- C. Work with Departmental Administration to assess the current USDA cultural environment using surveys and employee exit interviews.
- D. Develop pilot training modules that can be used by Mission Areas to educate employees, supervisors and conflict managers on sexual orientation issues.
- E. Work with other Employee Advisory Councils, Employee Organizations, and Departmental Staffs (Human Resources, Civil Rights, etc.) to achieve common goals.

Goal 3: GLBT customers of USDA are treated with respect, fairness and equity by USDA employees.

Objective 3.1: Provide fair and equitable service to GLBT customers.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Encourage the Office of Civil Rights to revise DR 4300-3 (public notification policy) to reinstate a single nondiscrimination policy statement that includes sexual orientation.
- B. Encourage the Office of Civil Rights to revise DR 4330-2 and 4330-3 (customer nondiscrimination policies) to establish a uniform nondiscrimination statement that includes sexual orientation.
- C. Encourage the Office of Civil Rights to develop a customer complaint brochure.

Objective 3.2: Utilize GLBT networks to increase participation of diverse communities conducting business (e.g., contracts and grants) with USDA.

Strategies for achieving the objective:

- A. Use the web page to reach out to small and minority-owned businesses.
- B. Advertise the web page in GLBT periodicals.

APPENDIX D

DATE: June 4, 2002

TO: All USDA Employees

FROM: Lou Gallegos
Assistant Secretary for Administration

SUBJECT: Gay and Lesbian Pride Month Celebrations at USDA

One of our nation's greatest strengths is the rich diversity of its people. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans form an important part of this national tapestry and have contributed to every facet of our society. All too often, however, these citizens have been marginalized, discriminated against, and even attacked for who they are.

Fortunately, the Federal Government has taken steps to prevent this form of discrimination in our workplace. The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 bars discrimination in hiring and promotion based on any factor, such as sexual orientation, that is not related to job performance and experience. Furthermore, Executive Order 13087 specifically prohibits sexual orientation discrimination in the Federal workplace, and USDA has included sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination policy statement since 1993.

However, preventing discrimination is not enough; diversity should also be celebrated. USDA is known as "The People's Department." The services we provide touch the lives of every American, and we are proud that our employee population is a microcosm of American society. Thus, it is only fitting that we recognize, respect, and welcome all of our employees and customers within the USDA family, without regard to sexual orientation.

On June 13, 2002, the Department will hold a Gay and Lesbian Pride Month celebration at 10:00 a.m. in the Jefferson Auditorium of the South Building in Washington, DC. The keynote speaker at this event will be Candace Gingrich, sister of Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives. I encourage all Headquarters employees to join me in attending this event, and I also encourage employees outside of the DC area to hold Gay and Lesbian Pride Month celebrations in your offices or work sites during the month of June.

Lou Gallegos
June 4, 2002

APPENDIX E

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council

is honored to present

The First Annual GLEAC Award

to

Patricia C. Browne

in recognition of your service to the Department of Agriculture by promoting equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees and customers over the past decade. In admiration and gratitude for your bold efforts to establish USDA GLOBE, for your visionary work on the First and Second USDA Task Forces on Sexual Orientation, and for your steadfast service as the Civil Rights Director of the Economic Research Service, the Council extends to you the heartfelt thanks of the Department.

June 13, 2002

APPENDIX F

[GLEAC Brochure](#)

APPENDIX G

Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: Questions and Answers

What is Sexual Orientation?

Everyone has a sexual orientation. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexual orientation as an emotional or affectional attraction to another person. This includes heterosexuality (attraction to the opposite sex), homosexuality (attraction to the same sex) and bisexuality (attraction to either sex). A person's sexual orientation emerges during adolescent development and is not the result of a conscious choice. The APA states that individuals can choose whether or not to act on their feelings, but cannot voluntarily change from one orientation to another.

Why is sexual orientation a workplace issue at USDA?

Employees should expect to find a diversity of sexual orientations at USDA. In the past, it was common practice to fire or to refuse to hire suspected homosexuals in the Federal workplace. Employees have been physically threatened, verbally abused, and subjected to hostile working conditions. Laws and policies have changed, and all USDA employees need to be aware of their responsibility to prevent this form of discrimination and to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) individuals are an accepted and valued part of the diverse USDA workforce.

Why do some people need to talk about their sexual orientation at work?

Sharing aspects of one's personal life with coworkers is a normal part of everyone's workday. Conversations about spouses, friends and family help form bonds of mutual respect and trust that support a productive workplace. Unfortunately, many GLBT employees do not discuss their personal life at work for fear that they will be rejected, harassed or threatened by other employees, thereby damaging their opportunities for advancement and promotion. Therefore, in order to be productive employees, it is important for GLBT individuals to be comfortable to "come out" by sharing information about their orientation and family life with their coworkers.

What if my religion says that homosexuality is morally wrong?

The USDA workforce includes a diversity of religious views, and discrimination on the basis of religion is prohibited in the Federal workplace. This means that no one can or should ask an employee to change his or her religious beliefs on homosexuality. Conversely, this also means that religious objections to homosexuality cannot be imposed on other coworkers or be used to obstruct nondiscrimination laws, policies, and diversity activities.

What are the laws and policies that prohibit sexual orientation discrimination at USDA?

- The 1978 Civil Service Reform Act states that Federal Agencies cannot "discriminate for or against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of conduct which does not adversely affect the performance of the employee or applicant or the performance of others" [5 USC 2302(b)].
- Presidential Executive Order 13087, issued in 1998, provides for "a uniform policy for the Federal government to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation."
- The Secretary's Civil Rights Policy Statement has prohibited sexual orientation discrimination at USDA since 1993.

What should I do if I believe I have been discriminated against because of my sexual orientation?

There are five avenues of redress available to a Federal employee who wishes to resolve a conflict or file a complaint of discrimination based on sexual orientation: (1) Alternative Dispute Resolution; (2) Agency discrimination complaint procedure; (3) Agency or Union grievance procedure; (4) Office of Special Counsel; and (5) appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board (for allegations involving personnel actions that are otherwise appealable to the Board). The employee who wishes to pursue conflict resolution or file a discrimination complaint using one of the above options should contact his or her Agency's Office of Civil Rights to learn how the Program operates in his/her agency.

Does USDA offer domestic partner benefits?

GLBT employees of USDA can share some Federal employee benefits with their domestic partners. For example, domestic partners can be designated as beneficiaries of an employee's Thrift Savings Plan and life insurance policies if the employee files the appropriate beneficiary forms. Health insurance, retirement, and long-term health care benefits cannot be shared with an employee's domestic partner by law and regulation.

What can I do to make USDA a better workplace for GLBT employees?

GLBT coworkers should be welcomed and valued members of your work unit. Acts of harassment or threats against GLBT employees should be reported immediately to your manager. Employees should refrain from GLBT jokes and negative comments. An individual's sexual orientation should not be a factor in hiring, promotion, evaluation, and work assignment decisions. Finally, the Department needs the thoughtful attention of every member of the USDA family in order to create a work environment where GLBT employees are safe, respected, and able to share in the full responsibilities and benefits of employment.

Where can I go if I have further questions about sexual orientation issues at USDA?

- The USDA Secretary's Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council web page:
<http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/USDA%20Council%20Files/gl.htm>
- Dr. T.J. Myers, Gay and Lesbian Employment Program Manager
USDA, OHRM, Whitten Building, Room 10B
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250
Phone: 202-720-9664 e-mail: thomasj.myers@usda.gov
- You can also contact your Agency's Civil Rights and Human Resources Offices for further information on complaint procedures, benefits, and local events and activities.
- USDA GLOBE (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Employee Organization)
<http://www.lambda.net/~aglobe/index.html>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

APPENDIX H

The USDA Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council

FY 2001-2002 Budget Summary as of September 30, 2002

Training contracts

FY 2001	Bonnie Berger & Associates	\$10,000.00
FY 2002	Ashby & Associates	25,000.00

Discretionary funds (FY 2002 only)

Conference and meeting room rentals	4,320.00
Travel expenses	7,127.20
Transgender training event	300.00
GLEAC Award plaque	170.00

FY 2001-2002 Total	\$46,917.20
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